

HIGHBURY COMMUNITY NEWS

www.highburycommunity.org

No 56 May 2008

The Transition buzz has started

By Nicola Baird

COULD WE SEE Highbury take the first steps along the Transition Town path?

Have you seen that film everyone's talking about because it turns strangers into neighbourhood champions? Even with its puzzlingly pessimistic name, *The End of Suburbia*, it has wowed communities throughout the world. When it was shown to a group in Kinsale, Eire they produced an Energy Descent Plan designed to take communities from oil dependency to local resilience. And it has inspired the birth of the fast growing Transition Town movement.

According to www.transitiontowns.org, a 'transition town initiative is a community working together to look peak oil and climate change in the eye and address this big question: "for all those aspects of life that this community needs in order to sustain itself and thrive, how do we significantly increase resilience (to mitigate the effects of peak oil) and drastically reduce carbon emissions (to mitigate the effects of climate change)?"' The answers provide a range of co-ordinated projects, crossing all areas of life, that 'leads to a collectively designed energy descent pathway'.

The first public Islington screening of *The End of Suburbia* attracted more than 50 people, mostly Highbury residents, and was organised jointly by Highbury Community Association, Friends of Gillespie Park and Islington Friends of the Earth. It was shown at Islington Ecology Centre which, boasting every possible eco feature ranging from

solar panels to sun tubes, was perfect inspiration. Indeed the building has become the first carbon neutral property in Islington thanks to the recent installation of a wood pellet (biomass) boiler to cover its minimal heating needs. For those of us shivering through the winter in Highbury's typical draughty Victorian terraces (or baulking at rising heating bills), the Centre's insulation is an eye-opener. You can see for yourself if you visit on the afternoons it is open (Tuesday and Thursday).



HCA, FOG AND ISFOE COMBINED
THE END OF SUBURBIA SCREENING

The End of Suburbia charts the US's reliance on super cheap fossil fuels to run their cars and heat their homes. In particular it shows how supplies of natural gas – a key fuel used to provide Americans with heating and air conditioning – have peaked (a phenomenon known as peak oil). It also details just how unprepared most Americans are for dealing with the major changes this will have on their lives. Commuting long drives to work, owning two or more gas guzzling vehicles and driving to out-of-town superstores are 20th-century habits that just can't last.

Smug as we might feel here in central London, usually only a short walk from neighbours, shops, public transport and even jobs, where the US goes the UK follows. The first half of the film is bleak. Towards the end it cheers up, offering a vision of how Americans could change in a bid to cope with the twin problems of rising fuel prices (caused by peak oil) and climate change. Redesigning the city so we work near where we live, growing more of our own food and developing self-sufficiency skills (rather than just buying new stuff) are presented as enviable ways to live, which also make neighbourhoods livelier and friendlier places.

As we watch the battle for the Democrats' presidential candidate it is chilling how little Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama mention the need to tackle climate change. The Republicans' candidate, John McCain, doesn't believe in it at all. However the US is a huge producer of the greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, that are causing our climate to change.

Over the next few months a new law, first suggested by Friends of the Earth, is due to be passed by Parliament which will help the UK take the lead in cutting its carbon dioxide emissions. The current Climate Change Bill (supported by both of Islington's MPs) will make it a legal obligation for Parliament to reduce these emissions whoever is based in Number 10. This looks set to ensure policies that help individuals try to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide they are producing. It will mean big changes for us all if we are to make an 80 per cent reduction in our carbon dioxide emissions by 2050.

Feedback on *The End of Suburbia* was

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

very positive. A group from Highgate Climate Action Network joined us for their first Transition Town outing – they had begun work towards making Highgate a Transition Town just a few days before. There were also members of Islington's only Carbon Reduction Action Group (CRAG), hoping to find new recruits to inspire each other to slash their carbon footprints. As an average person emits a wasteful 10 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, group spokesman, John Ackers, reckons it is easy to slash this figure by driving less (bikes and the car club work well), avoiding planes and insulating your home. Insulation turned out to be the hottest topic at the post-film chat at the Auld Triangle pub on St Thomas' Road, with many people swapping information about Islington's Climate Change Fund and progress on their plans to harness the renewable energy provided by the sun.

So what next? *The End of Suburbia* will get another evening screening (details to be confirmed) in the week commencing 13 October at Highbury Fields Secondary School. This time there will be a panel of experts and the chance to work out how you think we can make Highbury less oil dependent.

If you'd like to offer help running this event please contact nicolabaird@compuserve.com or antonymelville@dsl.pipex.com.

Until then expect to hear more about Transition Towns in the media. Totnes and Lewes are the stars (go see on your summer holidays) but there is already a Transition Town Brixton. Will Highbury want to be next? ■

What's the speed limit outside Arsenal tube station? By Roger Wright



Here we are in Gillespie Road, travelling along from Blackstock Road. It's 30mph – so that's clear then. But... turn to page 3

Find out more...

- *Transition Towns* by Rob Hopkins (Green Books, £12.95; available at www.foe.co.uk/shop). Could someone reading this order it for the library?
- www.transitiontowns.org.
- Islington Ecology Centre – information from www.islington.gov.uk.
- CRAG contact: Stephen Taylor (sltaylor001@yahoo.co.uk; 0207 263 7373) or see www.carbonrationing.org.uk/islington
- Islington Climate Change Fund offers advice on and grants for installing renewable energy technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines and biomass boilers: www.islington.gov.uk/Environment/climate_change/fund.asp or call 0800 953 1221.
- *How can I stop climate change?* (Collins, £14.99; available at www.foe.co.uk/shop) is Friends of the Earth's newest book and provides excellent info.
- *There's a hippo in my cistern* by Pete May (Collins, £10.99).

Blackstock Road raid

By Anna Gething

THURSDAY 27TH MARCH saw the largest police raid in borough history as more than 600 officers descended on Blackstock Road. Operation Mista, conceived to target suspected drug dealing, money laundering, handling of stolen goods and forgery, launched multiple raids across and beyond London, involving hundreds of officers from The Metropolitan, City of London and British Transport police forces. Following months of surveillance, Blackstock Road was shut, 19 businesses were searched and at least 35 arrests were made. A Metropolitan Police spokesman stated that 350 items of stolen property were recovered, including 120 laptops, 110 cameras, 32 iPods, 20 sat-nav systems and 47 forged documents.

Reactions to the raid have been mixed. Some shopkeepers have reported a drop in trade, attributed to customers' fear and shock, while others view the raid as beneficial, hoping customers will be encouraged to shop in what they feel is a safer environment. Although considered long overdue by some locals, the scale of the police presence also sparked anger: a heated meeting in Finsbury Park Mosque, held a week after the raid, heard protest at what was described as a heavy-handed operation that targeted the honest community rather than the real criminals. HCA members living in the area are keen to emphasise the need for a balance between reducing criminality and positively promoting this vibrant area.

More reactions and discussion can be found on A Blog For Finsbury Park (<http://finsburypark.wordpress.com/>), from which some of the above views were sourced. A petition is being organised by Mohammed Nacer, of the Arab Advice Bureau (020 8800 3374, arabadvicebureau@yahoo.co.uk), appealing for a crime-free Blackstock Road and carrying the statement: 'We believe this is a good place, full of character and diversity and a working example of the multi-cultural atmosphere that London is part of.' ■

and the Award goes to....

By Tony Miller

JUST THREE WEEKS after the glitterati of Hollywood turned out for the Oscars, another award ceremony took place down the road, in the equally glamorous surroundings of the refurbished Finsbury Town Hall. The Mayor, Councillor Barbara Smith, presented Civic Awards to a handful of stars who have worked tirelessly for the benefit of the community rather than to further their own careers. And two of the winners were... members of the HCA!

All right, that's not quite the full story. Martin and Maryse Jones are better known as the Chairman and Treasurer of the Highbury Fields Association. But they are HCA members. And the HFA and the HCA are complementary not rival associations, co-operating on a whole range of issues. Many of us, myself included, are members of both. So, for the purposes of this article, I propose to claim Martin and Maryse as our own.

Most of the improvements that have taken place on the Fields within the memory of local residents have been at the instigation or with the encouragement of Martin and Maryse: the children's playground, the new tennis courts, the renewal of the Oasis café, the licence for the 2 o'clock Club, even the installation of the Automatic Public Toilet, which finally arrived in 2001 after four years of painstaking negotiation. That's a long time to wait.

Recently, Martin has been the only community representative on the steering group for the "Vision for

Highbury Fields", a document, now adopted by the Council, which will secure the conservation and maintenance of the Fields for the foreseeable future. He and Maryse are always mindful that the amenity of the Fields, Islington's only significant green open space, should be preserved for and available to all users, not just local residents.

They always keep an eye on and, where necessary, oppose the tide of development that has been surging over Highbury in the past decade. Maryse served on the Design Panel, Martin on the Planning User Panel. They have tried to mitigate the effects of most of the major planning applications in the area, the Arsenal Development, Aberdeen Works, Channel Tunnel Rail Link, Robin's Garden, Circle 33 Headquarters etc., and have had many successes in reducing the scale and impact of proposals. This has often placed them in conflict with developers, but Martin and Maryse always seek to resolve differences with courtesy and common sense rather than by confrontation.

They work closely with many other Islington and London community groups. They were involved in the creation and running of the Olden Community Gardens, the Estorick Museum and the Highbury Roundhouse Community Centre. Maryse has been involved in the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies since its foundation in 1988.

Martin and Maryse are a formidable double act. Not many of us could match their record. That's why they are two of the very few chosen to receive the Mayor's Civic Award. It might come with a framed certificate, rather than a gold statuette, but it is just as coveted. ■

What's the speed limit outside Arsenal tube station?

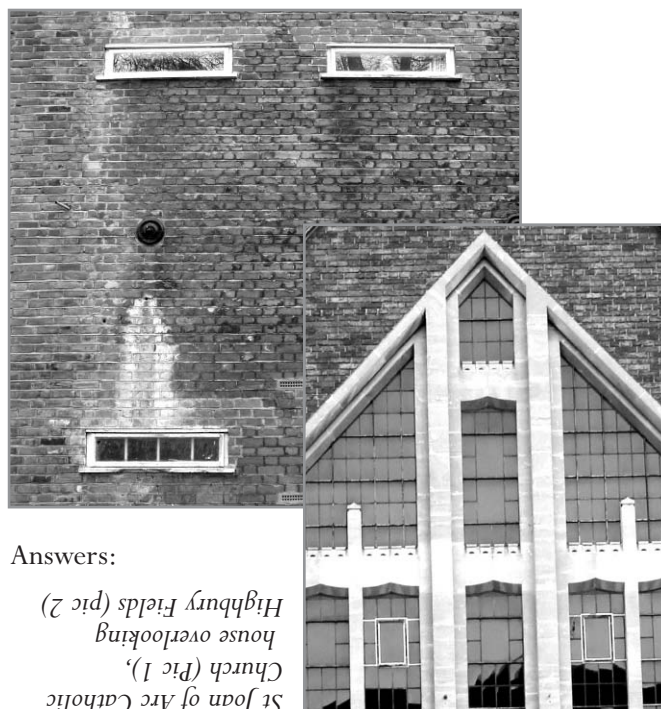
Here we are travelling down Highbury Hill...



Curiouser and curiouser said Alice, the traffic engineer, now it's 20mph! AND... turn to page 6.

Hidden Highbury – guess the location!

Photographs by Christine Kaltoft and James Hood.



Answers:

*St Joan of Arc Catholic Church (Pic 1),
Highbury Fields (pic 2)
house overlooking*

Liberation from the plastic bag By Orlando Jopling

ON A BALMY day this summer, I'm hoping that Newington Green will be the first community in London to liberate itself from the plastic shopping bag.

But how is this going to help us with the bigger challenges we face? Shouldn't I be trying to help solve the global food crisis or unravelling our suicidal tango with fossil fuels, instead of dilly-dallying with plastic bags? The answer for me lies somewhere behind a statement one of my friends made the other day: 'But I think the human race deserves to become extinct – we've made such a mess of things!' I'm sure you have all come across this kind of reaction. But they don't mean it. I believe it comes from a towering and daunting sense of helplessness. And I believe that this sense of helplessness is one of the biggest challenges facing those of us who would like to change to a more sustainable way of living.

To counter the sense of futility I think we need small steps. Simple, tangible, achievable improvements. Something which we can all do and can all agree on. You can't argue in favour of the slow and painful death by starvation of the estimated two million marine animals every year who ingest plastic.

And once I made the decision to start, I found I was pushing at an open door. Suddenly there's an amazing team of people who are helping with the campaign. 94 per cent of residents want a ban. I've talked to dozens of great shopkeepers who all would like to stop the marine carnage ... if only people would bring their own bag.



And of course many people are already.

It is something which is already helping in its own small way to strengthen the bonds of our community, and add to the fantastic work of the Newington Green Action Group who are making Newington Green a great place to live. But most importantly of all, small steps open people's minds and make them think about our crazily wasteful way of living. It literally sets them on the path to a more sustainable future. The proof of the pudding is in Modbury, where the whole community have revolutionised the way they deal with their packaging and waste, less than a year after going plastic bag free.

But back in Newington Green it's not easy. What do the dry cleaners do? Presenting the clean clothes in plastic bags, thereby giving the subconscious impression that the clothes are so clean that they are actually new, feels to them to be an essential part of their business

model. Yes, they are indulging in a little deception but it is a deception which we all happily partake in. Of course we could take our own suit bag to collect the clean clothes in, but then somehow they wouldn't seem so clean. But taking our suit bag is what we must do.

What about the late-night takeaways? Who comes home from the pub with his own organic cotton bag? Cornstarch bags are the answer. And what is Vincent, the store manager at our Tesco Express to do? He has a three-line whip from head office: 'You must continue to give out plastic bags!' But in his heart, of course he agrees that it would be better to stop the senseless killing of dolphins, seals, whales.

Well, it's only week three of the campaign. And despite these challenges, we have fantastic support. Our local councillors Anna Berent and Rhodri Jamieson-Bell have organised 3,000 'I love Newington Green' bags, free from the council. Fantastic. This should help to turn the tide. I need to find someone to match that funding, so we can give out a bag for each and every resident. Any ideas?

We're getting the school involved, which will give a whole new meaning to 'pester power'. And best of all, all our shops are reporting a steadily increasing number of people bringing their own bag. Let's hope that the movement spreads across London. And don't even think about accepting your dry cleaning in a plastic garment bag. Spare a thought for the dolphin which that plastic might kill. ■

Recycling Tetra Paks

By Sally Davis

Hackney Council collects Tetra Paks for recycling from bins around the borough, though none of the bins are very convenient for Highbury residents. The nearest is on Green Lanes near the John Scott Health Centre. If you work around Angel there's a bin at Sturt Street off City Road. If you go to Ridley Road market there's a bin outside Kingsland Shopping Centre car park. Thanks to Elizabeth Moir for the tip-off. ■

Pop Concerts

The Bruce Springsteen concerts at Emirates Stadium on 30th and 31st May are being monitored by the Council for noise impact on residents.

Arsenal is leafletting the area and the Council is writing to all who wrote previously.

Concert Noise Reports: 020 7527 3258.

Other queries: Niall Ford 020 7527 3227

Arsenal's Cracks

By Roger Wright

NOT THE CRACKS in Arsenal's defence, of course, but the ones in people's houses that have appeared since the redevelopment started.

When the redevelopment started back in 2006, all the properties backing on to Highbury Stadium, as well as some in surrounding streets, were surveyed by Highbury Holdings (the developers). Each property owner was provided with a copy of the survey. Since then, there has been all the demolition, excavation and redevelopment of Highbury Stadium. In particular, there were a great many lorry trips involved, over a number of speed humps, some of which were finally removed by Islington Council after the 'big dig' was finished. You can still see the subsidence and cracks in the road in Aubert Park.

Towards the end of 2007, after a lot of pressure from residents at one of the 'liaison meetings' in Aubert Court Community Centre, a limited number of properties were resurveyed. We have been in contact with as many of the owners of these properties as we can. They all report a variety of cracks and other signs of 'movement', yet the surveyors of Highbury Holdings have included an identical letter with each second survey saying they 'do not attribute any change in condition to the carrying out of the Highbury redevelopment'. Of course, where walls such as garden walls have actually collapsed, Highbury Holdings have, after some haggling, paid part at least of the cost of repairs.

The letter from the surveyors saying the change in the condition of any properties is unrelated to the development has no legal basis, so if you think you have any 'structural damage' from the development you should seek advice from a surveyor of your own. Many property owners immediately next to the old stadium already have their 'party wall' surveyor engaged, who could pursue this matter too. So if you think you have a case, don't be put off by the letter. ■

What is Wedge? Help keep your local independent business

By Beth Moir

WEDGE IS A reward card for using local independent shops and services. It costs £10 per year (£5 of which goes to charity if bought online), and entitles you to various discounts in participating businesses across London. So far as I know, La Fromagerie and Highbury Vintners, both in Highbury Park, and Fields Delicatessen in Corsica Street, have signed up locally, but more are likely to follow. There are about 500 Wedge traders altogether, many of which are in the St. Paul's Road, Upper Street/Angel/Stoke Newington area. Look for the Wedge logo in the window, where the card can also be bought. ■

Full details on the Wedge website:
<http://www.wedgecard.co.uk/>.

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Send articles to Anna Gething, Editor, HC News
or contact HCA on hcanews@hotmail.com

NOT TO BE MISSED!

Return of the Kalahari Bushmen

Supper Talk:

Saturday 7th June, 6-9.30 pm, £16 including meal

Barrister Gordon Bennett and Kali Mercier, for Survival International, spent many months in Botswana successfully fighting the legal case of the Kalahari Bushmen to get back their homelands after eviction by the Botswana government. With their first-hand experience of both the Botswana legal system and the way of life of the Bushmen, their superb photos and fascinating stories promise to make this a most interesting evening.

There'll be the usual wonderful buffet supper and live music. A great local event to bring friends to.

Highbury Roundhouse, 71 Ronalds Road, N5 1XB
(just off Highbury Fields)

Tickets: 020 7359 5916
admin@highbury-roundhouse.org.uk
Evenings: 020 7226 7240

Fundraising for the Roundhouse and the Bushmen.

What's the speed limit outside Arsenal tube station?

Here we are travelling along Drayton Park...



So it's 20mph here as well.

So the speed limit outside Arsenal tube station depends on from where you have come and in what direction you are travelling – clearly that can't be right. The original plans Islington Council showed us for the Gillespie 20mph zone were straightforward, and not like this at all. Have the Council Officers in charge of the scheme checked what their contractors have actually done? We will be asking the Council what is going on here. In the meantime, if you know anyone who has been booked for speeding along these roads, advise them to appeal. We will also be asking the Council why the lower part of Highbury Hill is a 30 mph zone surrounded on all sides by a 20 mph zone!



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Highbury Community Association

The HCA represents 780 residents and businesses on all aspects of living and working in Highbury, Lower Holloway and Finsbury Park. Run by volunteers, it relies on donations. Send cheques to HCA Treasurer, c/o 83 Highbury Hill, N5 1SX, made out to 'Highbury Community Association'.

Send letters or articles for next issue to
hcanews@hotmail.com or HCA News, 85 Highbury Hill, N5 1SX. Visit www.highburycommunity.org

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